

TOWN AND VILLAGE E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS POLICY

G&K Comments – 6-11-08

PURPOSE

The Town of Rhinebeck has been broadcasting town news and information to residents via e-mail for several years. The Web Site Committee is calling these e-mail broadcasts e-mail subscriptions. This policy provides guidelines for the use of the Town E-Mail Subscriptions Program.

E-mail subscriptions are used solely for the purpose of providing information to residents and other subscribers. They do not include inter- or intra-governmental e-mail. The Technology Committee oversees the creation and use of official town and village e-mail accounts and makes recommendations regarding official town and village e-mail accounts for employees, elected officials and other government representatives.

FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

The information distributed through e-mail subscriptions is to be used for informational purposes only; it is not to be construed as a legal notice. To notify subscribers of this fact, each e-mail in each e-mail subscription should contain the following disclaimer in the footer section:

"The information contained in this e-mail is for informational purposes only. It is not to be construed as a legal notice."

WEB SITE AND E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Web Site Committee recognizes that e-mail subscriptions are an important new public outreach tool for the Town and Village. The Web Site Committee has assumed a stewardship and advisory role for e-mail subscriptions because the Web site and e-mail subscriptions serve a similar function – they broadcast news and information electronically. They also coordinate and reinforce one another – sites that use e-mail to drive traffic are generally more successful than those that don't, and visitors expect to sign up and manage an e-mail subscription through the Web site.

E-mail subscriptions support the Web Site Committee's mission to:

- * Inform, educate and communicate town and village business
- * Assist and encourage participation in community decision-making and civic life
- * Help improve responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of public employees, volunteers and officials

The Web Site Committee recommends centralizing e-mail subscriptions through the Web site because:

- * Subscribers expect to sign up for and manage an e-mail subscription on the Web site
- * Subscribers can sign up for all Town- and Village-sponsored news in one place
- * It allows the Town and Village to offer a well-defined privacy policy covering all subscriptions
- * Eliminates the need to coordinate subscription changes across lists

MANAGING E-MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Each subscription should be managed by a Subscription Manager. The Subscription Manager is responsible for receiving and processing content, adding names to the subscriber list that are gathered via sign-in sheets, and sending subscription e-mails. Managing an e-mail subscription will take one to several hours a week. Town Board and Village Board should plan accordingly to manage these tasks.

Only the Subscription Manager may send e-mail to his or her designated subscription. The Town and Village Records Managers may need access to e-mail addresses on all subscriptions to satisfy the requirements of state and local laws, but should not send e-mail to a subscription unless a) he or she is the Subscription Manager, or b) the Subscription Manager requests it.

The Web Site Committee will help with overflow and technical issues, but as volunteers should not be relied upon to manage e-mail subscriptions.

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGERS

Subscription Managers as of the date on this policy are:

Town E-Mail Group -- Deputy Town Clerk
Town Recreation Newsletter -- Deputy Town Clerk

In addition, the following people have access to e-mail subscriptions for administrative purposes:

Town Clerk
Web Site Committee Co-Chairs

Any changes or additions to this list of Subscription Managers should be approved by the Town Board for Town subscriptions and the Village Board for Village subscriptions, and given to the Web Site Committee for administration purposes.

Employees who have access to e-mail subscriptions are required to follow appropriate procedures, as outlined by the Town and Village Boards and New York State law (including NYS Technology Law 208 amended December 2005 and adopted as Town Privacy Policy), in connection with any disclosures of personal information.

CONTENT GUIDELINES

Each subscription should have a clear description of the types of content to be distributed to the list, and the anticipated frequency of e-mails. Subscriptions will only contain news and information and maintain a consistent style. Subscriptions must not include attachments, but may include links to documents posted on the Web site.

All departments, committees, and other official bodies of the Town and Village may submit items for inclusion in the Town E-Mail Group subscription.

The Town E-Mail Group Subscription Manager shall send all acceptable submissions from Town and Village departments and committees in a timely manner. The Town E-Mail Group

Subscription Manager will only send content that meets the content guidelines (see Acceptable Submissions below).

The Web Site Committee will advise Subscription Managers, Town Board, Village Board, committees and departments regarding:

- * adding, deleting, combining and splitting subscriptions
- * appropriate content
- * preparing content for e-mail
- * proper formatting
- * good subject lines
- * timing and coordination of e-mails
- * standard e-mail etiquette

Acceptable Submissions are:

- * Town- and village-sponsored events
- * School notices
- * Policy notice/reminder
- * Meeting notices, agendas and minutes
- * Notice of official document availability – online or by mail or in person
- * Change in office hours, hours of operation, holiday schedules, special hours, etc.
- * Job openings and volunteer opportunities
- * Other content recommended by departments and committees, or content submitted by the Rhinebeck Central School District or other municipalities (for example Dutchess County or New York State), AND approved by the designated Town Board or Village Board liaison, depending on which entity has jurisdiction

Unacceptable Submissions are:

- * Political content
- * Opinions
- * Personal commentary
- * Fundraising
- * Commercial advertisements or information

RECRUITING SUBSCRIBERS

The Town and Village should encourage subscribers to sign up on the Web site or via a sign-in sheet at events in Town or Village Halls. Names should be delivered to the Subscription Manager regularly and entered into the system as soon as possible.